

Book reviews

Basic Sciences for Obstetrics and Gynaecology. Fourth Edition. Tim Chard and Richard Lilford. Springer-Verlag. ISBN No. 3-540-19903-9. £19.50.

The authors of this book honestly and correctly admit, in their preface, that the underlying philosophy is to address only those facts which are neither speculative nor contentious. Surprisingly, in a subject which is full of speculation and contention there are 194 pages of fact. Over the years this book has provided an excellent starting point and end point for reading for Part I Membership of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists.

Having acknowledged the limitations of the book, it would be unreasonable of me to pick holes in specific sections. There are, however, glaring deficiencies in molecular biology, which is only explained extremely superficially, in sex steroid endocrinology where only the most major hormones earn a mention, in statistics which has increased by just over a 100% from one page to two pages from the first edition but is still woefully inadequate, and in the explanation of ultrasound and doppler.

I recommend this book to all Part I Membership candidates. However, there are no references in this text. It contains only the most superficial knowledge and can act only as an aid memoire for this subject.

NEIL McCLURE

Pelvic Floor Re-education, Principles and Practice: Schussler, Laycock, Norton and Stanton. Springer-Verlag. ISBN No. 0-387-19860-1. £65.00.

This is a beautiful book. It consists of 180 pages of extremely readable information on urogynaecology and the treatment of stress incontinence. There is barely one page devoted to pelvic surgery.

Despite the fact that there are twenty-seven authors in this short book, the editors have fulfilled their job magnificently: the terminology and thinking appear to be standardised throughout the entire text.

As a gynaecologist who enjoys vaginal surgery (and the challenge of a laparoscopic colposuspension) this book is itself a challenge to adopt a much less aggressive surgical and a much more physiotherapeutic approach to the correction of stress incontinence of urine. The arguments are meticulously reasoned.

The book is divided into four sections: (1) the anatomy and function of the pelvic floor musculature; (2) the evaluation of the pelvic floor; (3) childbirth and pelvic floor damage and (4) pelvic floor re-education. No section should be read without reading the preceding sections. Each section is short and written by an expert in its field. The standard of illustration is high, by and large. The concept of pelvic floor musculature and its relation to urethral function is something which has always perplexed me (as it is my firm belief, has it perplexed most of the authors that I have read before on this subject). However, in this book the gaps in knowledge are fully stated, but as far as is possible present day knowledge is logically and clearly explained.

As a clinician, though, the section on the pelvic floor re-education was the most enlightening. Like most gynaecologists, I know that patients spend a long time attending the physiotherapists and that pelvic floor exercises are done. However, the assessment of patients for the correct pelvic floor exercises and the importance of encouragement are emphasised. I feel, that having read this book I will be able to talk to the physiotherapists and understand what they are saying.

In conclusion, this is an excellent book which all gynaecologists who treat stress incontinence should read. I would recommend it highly.

NEIL McCLURE